Amendments to the Specification

Please enter the following amendments to the specification. In the following amendments, changes are shown with deletions in ~~strikethrough~~ and additions underlined. The following amendments are made by way of replacement paragraphs.

Please replace the Descriptions of the Drawings, beginning on **page 10, line 2**, with the following amended Descriptions of the Drawings:

FIGURES 1A and 1B are ~~is~~ a representation of one embodiment of the membrane, both on its own and also fitted onto the finish of a bottle.

FIGURE 2 shows the operation of the membrane in conjunction with a filling valve.

FIGURE 3 shows a preferred embodiment of the aseptic filling method and system, using the membrane.

FIGURES 4A and 4B are ~~is~~ a representation of a further embodiment of the membrane, both on its own and fitted onto the finish of a bottle, whereby the membrane's segments are inclined toward the inside of the package, so as to facilitate the passage of large machine parts.

FIGURES 5A and 5B are ~~is~~ another representation of an embodiment of the membrane, both on its own and fitted onto the finish of a bottle, the membrane having no segments but being sufficiently flexible to open by stretching.

FIGURES 6A and 6B are ~~is~~ a representation of yet another embodiment of the membrane, both on its own and fitted onto the finish of a bottle, the membrane having a flap that can be pushed open and that re-closes against the outer rim of the membrane.

FIGURES 7A and 7B are ~~is~~ a representation of still another embodiment of the membrane, both on its own and fitted onto the finish of a bottle, the membrane having a flap that can be pushed open and that re-closes against the inner bore of the bottle's finish.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on **page 11, line 6** with the following amended paragraph:

Figures 1A and 1B show ~~shows~~ one embodiment of the membrane. Membrane 1 may be made of a material of suitable flexibility and product compatibility, such as a suitable grade of silicone rubber. In fig. 1, membrane 1 may have an outer rim 2 and an inner section 3 comprised of a plurality of segments 4. Segments 4 may be divided by a plurality of lips 5. Lips 5 may be designed to fit together so as to be reasonably gas-tight. Membrane 1 may fit onto opening 6 of package 7.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on **page 11, line 12** with the following amended paragraph:

In fig. 1A, package 7 is shown as a bottle, but similar principles apply to cans and other hollow packages. A cap 8 may be placed on top of the membrane 1 after filling. Membrane 1 is preferably firmly attached to opening 6, so that membrane 1 may remain in correct position during the filling process described hereunder, until cap 8 is applied. There are several simple means of achieving adequate attachment between membrane 1 and opening 6. For example, membrane 1 can be shaped so that it grips the inner edge 9 of opening 6, as shown by fig. 1A. Or, membrane 1 can grip the outer edge of opening 6 (not shown). Figures 4A and 4B show ~~shows~~ a further example of firm attachment between membrane 1 and opening 6.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on **page 17, line 6** with the following amended paragraph:

Figures 4A and 4B show ~~shows~~ an alternative embodiment of membrane 1, here denoted as membrane 66. Membrane 66 may have a plurality of inwardly inclined segments 67 that facilitate the passage of bulky filling valve components (e.g., can or bottle filling valve components) through membrane 66. Figs. 4A and 4B also shows an alternative means of attachment of membrane 66 to opening 6. The top rim 68 of opening 6 may be rebated to provide an inner surface 69. This enables the placement of a locking ring 70, which may be part of membrane 66 and need not generally protrude beyond the outer surface 71 of opening 6. The

attachment of membrane 1 or 66 in the general manner shown in fig. 4A, where locking ring 70 either grips inner surface 69, or simply surface 71 (not shown), enables segments 67 to be folded back until said segments come in contact with top rim 68 during filling, which provides the largest possible filling aperture.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on **page 17, line 16** with the following amended paragraph:

Figures 5A and 5B show ~~shows~~ a further alternative embodiment of membrane 1, here denoted as membrane 75. Membrane 75 has no segments and stretches open the central lip 76, sufficiently to enable the passage of filler valve parts, due to the flexibility of the material used for membrane 75 and/or the shape of membrane 75. Membrane 75 can re-close by returning to its original form.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on **page 17, line 21** with the following amended paragraph:

Figures 6A and 6B show ~~shows~~ yet another alternative embodiment of membrane 1, here denoted as membrane 80. Membrane 80 incorporates a flap 81, which closes against membrane lip 82 and is flexibly hinged by flap hinge 83. Membrane 80 may have an annular rim 84, which may provide a seal against cap 8 and to which hinge 83 may be attached. Filler valve parts can protrude through membrane 80 by pushing open flap 81, and flap 81 can re-close by flexibly returning to its original position.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on **page 17, line 27** with the following amended paragraph:

Figures 7A and 7B show ~~shows~~ yet a further alternative embodiment of membrane 1, here denoted as membrane 85. Membrane 85 may include a rim 86, which may provide a seal against cap 8. An arm 87 may project from rim 86 to a suspended flap 88. Suspended flap 88 may provide a seal against the inner bore of opening 6 of package 7. Suspended flap 88 can be

opened by being pushed aside by filler valve parts, and re-close by flexibly returning to its original position.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on **page 18, line 23** with the following amended paragraph:

The material of membrane 1 (or membranes 66, 75, 80 and 85) depends on the particular embodiment of membrane chosen (e.g., Figs 1A/1B, or figs. 4A/4B, or figs. 5A/5B, or figs. 6A/6B, or figs. 7A/7B) and on the practical material properties set by the application of package 7. Elastomeric materials are suitable for all embodiments, but non-elastomers are possible for some embodiments, primarily as represented by figs. 6A and 6B.